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*with Daniela Claudia Szasz*



*Column by Daniela Szasz*

# Gray suit, shirt and tie or jeans?

What should we wear in business? That's the big question here and now. Let's wait and see which common denominator we arrive at in the end and whether we'll actually succeed in doing so. In think there are almost as many opinions about this as there are people in the world.

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On this topic I also wouldn't like to speak of what is called the "first impression, or at least I don't want to go into it in depth. Because this is a subject that my dear columnist-colleague and trainer, Alexander Plath, commands to absolute perfection. So if you should want to go into it in depth, I can in all good conscience refer to him: [www.alexanderplath.com](http://www.alexanderplath.com)

Almost every time I met Alex at first I thought: Just how can anybody look so perfect? When I first saw him, I was also convinced that anybody who also looked so perfect was surely a real square. That's not the case at all. He is really likable and just lives his passion with great conviction. But as I said, for more information, please get in touch with him directly.

My approach is less perfect. To a certain extent I'm probably the opposite or simply somewhat different. Just recently, for example, I was sitting in a meeting (as the only woman) with absolutely top-class executives where the topic was exactly this. So the top-class male execu-

tives were advised to only appear in future wearing a suit and tie. The reason for this was that through our position it's important to always make a "professional and good impression."

My first thought was: Thank God I'm not a man! The poor men. Then my second thought was: Oh my God, if they want the men to do that, what do they probably expect me to do? Will I only be allowed to run around in a conservative gray suit, with a skirt to the ankles, a frilly blouse and my hair combed back severely (with a bun, of course)? The very idea made me feel a bit queasy.

One of my male colleagues was giving me quite dirty looks anyway as if he felt like sticking me immediately into a gray suit (he didn't say anything, which was better for him). It was clear to me that if it was ever the case that I was forced to do something like that, then that would be the moment that I'd definitely give up networking of my own free will. An infringement of my freedom? In that case I'd go to war, that's definite. ☐☐ And it was also clear to me that if somebody

had said to me 14 years ago that, if you want to be successful in networking, you can only run around dressed up conservatively, I'd either never have started or I'd have designed my own "conservative collection," which would have defined the concept anew. ;-)

I waited and listened to the course of the discussion, particularly how a male colleague was slightly "criticized" because of his outfit. He got into some difficulties and I must say that in general I personally like his outfit very much. Enough reason for me to jump in and defend him. I find his style has something absolutely authentic about it. He wears high-quality suits, just not combined with shirt and tie. But with casual shirts or polo shirts. I admit I have a predilection for this style in men if it suits them.

You only have to think of Joachim Löw, the trainer of the German football team, during the recent World Cup. Hey, I've never seen him with a shirt and tie. Yes indeed, but with first-class suits combined sometimes with polo shirts, sometimes with a shirt WITHOUT a tie or a

## *“Make the best of yourself, at*

V-neck pullover. Think of the Germany–Spain game, where Joahim Löw was to be seen in a black suit with a high-quality blue cashmere pullover from Strenesse. I simply maintain that it suited him to a T and he definitely didn’t look any less professional. On the contrary – he was honored and praised for his style.

He is completely in line with the trend. On the one hand, it looks casual and, nevertheless, very competent. I don’t know anybody who’d cast doubt on that. On the other hand, it suits him incredibly well and he comes across as totally authentic.

Another example, for instance, is Steve Jobs of Apple. The man is one of the most successful CEOs in the world. Hello?? the world!! Who’s ever seen the man wearing a tie? Basically he wears jeans combined with something casual. All the corporate people at Apple and the best designers there don’t wear suits at all. Does that mean that they’re not professional and that you can’t take them seriously?

Recently I’ve had the pleasure of spending some time with high-class producers and directors. With one of them I had a discussion about an event that’ll be taking place soon, one I’m organizing along with another colleague. The question was whether we want to prescribe a dress code.

I argued that we didn’t have to tell that to our networkers, particularly the executives, they’re always incredibly well-dressed. I explained to him the style here with us. Then he said that with them it’s exactly the opposite. The people in top positions, those who really did have something to say, would rather run around dressed casually or in jeans, looking rather inconspicuous, etc. While those who hadn’t yet achieved much

dress up and run around in suits wearing ties in order to prove how important they are.

Hmm... a very interesting statement, don’t you think?

Now back to our business. Does it mean that, just because we’re networkers and top-class leaders, we always have to run around looking like vacuum cleaner salesmen and bankers? Above all if you don’t like it? How many people here probably dress up to disguise themselves?

Isn’t it perhaps much more important to be authentic in what we do and how we run around?

Now that doesn’t mean that I find it good when somebody in tattered shoes, bedraggled, unwashed and unkempt, presses a visiting card into a person’s hand and says: “Hey, if you join me, you’ll get rich...” Or dressed in such an outfit goes on the stage and holds a talk. So by no means would I like to be misunderstood. But in my opinion there are differences between being professional, wearing what suits you, your individual style, on the one hand, and wearing something that comes across like a mask, as something you’ve been forced to wear, on the other.

Let me make the following remark: There are also men wearing suits and ties who look really dreadful either because they aren’t authentic in their style or because the color combination is a disaster. And quite definitely I wouldn’t look much better either in a mousy gray suit.

That’s a bit like when some people out there trumpet in high tones about how ethical they are and about the values they’re using to building up their MLM

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business and at the same time phone up the team partners of other leaders at least five times, spam them with e-mails and send them text messages by every rule in the book and do everything to poach them... It's simply phony and not authentic and doesn't fit with what they preach.

It's a bit similar with outfits. People sense whether it's your style, whether you feel good wearing it or whether your dressed up in disguise.

So now we have the big question here about what should be allowed, what's professional and possibly also what is still authentic, don't we?

In advance I'd like to emphasize that I've got nothing against men wearing shirts and ties. There are some I wouldn't want to see wearing anything else because that style simply really suits them fabulously. Above all when they've grasped how to combine the right colors as far as socks, suit, shirt, tie, belt and shoes are concerned. And here too, please don't just run around in black, gray and white. Then it can be very elegant and varied. And something more for the men who stick their necks out so far: I've never seen so many cheap shoes with expensive suits as in the networking industry! The shoes reveal everything about a person!

In addition, for those who aren't in the know: It's totally ancient history and no longer really stylish or trendy to run around in a black or gray suit with a white shirt and tie. People, that's 20 years ago – it's so 1990s! Be a bit daring for once and try a bit of color. If you're already wearing a suit, which as I've said looks super on some people, then please combine it with something lively. Somebody with a good figure, somebody who's slim can also combine jeans well with a shirt,

jacket and tie. It doesn't look so well if there's a big belly poking out at the front. That's a definite no-no. So first get rid of the belly, then this combination will also work – well, you know already.

As I've already said, the style of Joachim Löw, the German football trainer, is super neat! I know a few super leaders who run around like that. It's interesting that these people have come so far and become so successful without a tie! This means that ***the people they attract are attracted precisely because they are how they are. With their own individual style!***

If these people were suddenly to force themselves into something else, into something where they didn't feel good, just because it was expected of them, the success of their personality wouldn't exist anymore. They'd be running round as something that they aren't.

***It's extremely important to dress stylishly, in a style appropriate to your build and character. In other words, to simply make the best of yourself. When you have a tendency towards overweight or having a bit of a paunch, the style that suits you will be different from the one that suits somebody who's super slim and has a more athletic build. It also makes a difference whether you're tall or short and you shouldn't forget your age.***

So "How then do I find my style?" is surely the question now, isn't it?

Choose a female friend you know who has ***good taste and style*** and ask her whether she'll go shopping with you. Just ask her whether she'll help you find your style. Best of all take two style-conscious girls or women with you. Because if the

two of them agree that what you have on looks really good, then go for it. Don't necessarily listen to the sales assistant who says everything looks great because, after all, she wants to get her hands on your credit card. ***So take a good look at WHO you go shopping with!!!*** Don't go shopping with Mommy or with somebody who's had hardly any style for the last 20 years. Because then that's what you'll look like too when you come out of the shop.

By the way: ***EXPENSIVE isn't automatically STYLISH!*** Some people look as if they've just come from the flea market even in expensive clothes. And you can look like you've just jumped out of a fashion catalog in clothes that are more reasonably priced.

I confess that that I really like designer clothes and good quality and as far as possible I only buy such things. But that doesn't mean that I've always been able to afford to do this. So: ***Make the best of yourself, at a price that's appropriate to YOUR purse.!***

You don't have to run around in expensive clothes, if at the moment that's not on the cards. I know some manufacturers who produce good men's suits in the middle-range price segment. So the choice is available; what is still necessary now is: Eyes open while buying clothes! ;-)

And... to finish off: I'm therefore totally in favor of men in networking also being freed of shirt and tie and being allowed to dress in accordance with their style.

Lots of fun shopping and tell me sometime what's happened.

Yours, Dany

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